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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
NORTHWESTERN DIVISION, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 2870
PORTLAND, OREGON 97208-2870

RECEIVED

MAY 03 2001

OFFICE OF ECOSYSTEMS
AND COMMUNITIES

Reply to
Attention of:

APR 30 2001

Water Management Division

Mr. Donald Sampson
Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
729 NE Oregon, Suite 200
Portland, Oregon 97232

Dear Mr. Sampson:

On behalf of the Federal Agencies I would like to respond to the concerns you raised at the Regional Executive meeting on April 13, 2001. Your concerns included operations at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) dams during commercial treaty gillnet fishing periods, water temperature effects on fish at dams, and emergency criteria to facilitate operations at Corps mainstem dams.

In response to the spring fishing season, the Corps met the same commitments that we made with Ted Strong from the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission regarding stable pool elevations during Zone 6 fishing in May 1998. The agreement is to operate the Bonneville forebay near the top one and one half feet of the operating range, while maintaining some operational flexibility in the other Zone 6 pools to meet other project needs. Accordingly, prior to the commencement of each commercial fishing season this spring, the Corps issued instructions to the Bonneville project and Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) to hold the Bonneville pool stable as described above. The regulation was to maintain the pool range as a hard constraint during tribal fishing periods.

Your request also included spill at Bonneville Dam up to the limits outlined in the National Marine Fisheries Service 2000 Biological Opinion. The BPA declared a power emergency on April 3, 2001, and again on April 16, 2001. These power emergencies were intended to protect Northwest power system reliability through the month of April. As part of the contingency to meet power system reliability, the emergency declaration extension meant that little or no spill would occur through April, unless water supply conditions dramatically improved. In such case, the Federal Agencies will consider spill operations.

The Corps' Fish Passage Plan (FPP) addresses individual project's plans and objectives for reducing stress or mortalities of fish and it also includes operating criteria for the Juvenile Fish Transportation Program. The FPP addresses monitoring of water temperature and fish condition that will be done at McNary Dam this summer. The FPP also identifies our intent to use the Fish Passage Operations and Maintenance (FPOM) process to address special needs for fish facility operations at any project.

The Operations Plan being prepared will address the emergency process that will be taken by the Corps or Bureau of Reclamation in the event of a fish-related emergency at any project. Although the plan may not include specific examples of emergencies, or actions that may be taken, the plan will address a process that may be taken to avert further stress, or mortality to fish.

Finally, we are working on a drought response plan to identify special operations or other activities appropriate to respond to this year's forecasted low runoff. These actions will include measures that reduce water usage, minimize fish mortality; and assure fish "emergency preparedness" to help us be more responsive in the event similar water conditions recur.

As we work through this challenging low water year we look forward to your continued participation in the regional process.

Sincerely,



Carl A. Strock
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
Division Engineer

Copies Furnished:

Ms. Donna Darm, Acting Regional Director
National Marine Fisheries Service
7600 Sand Point Way, N.E.
Bin C15700, Building 1
Seattle, Washington 98115-0070

Mr. Ken Pedde, Acting Regional Director
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Pacific Northwest Regional Office
1150 North Curtis Road
Boise, Idaho 83706-1234

Mr. Steve Wright, Acting Administrator
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621A
Portland, Oregon 97208

Mr. Chuck Findley, Regional Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101

Mr. Bill Shake
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
911 N.E. 11th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97232-4181